

Nosebleed by elizaleigh1

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Summary: In which El gets a nosebleed, and Hopper forgets that a telekinetic teenage girl is still just a teenage girl.

Nosebleed

Sometimes, taking care of El feels a lot more like raising a puppy than a teenaged girl.

Hopper remembers the dog he'd had as a boy, who every so often would begin chewing on something or other and illicit a quick, "What did you eat?!" and, when the culprit had been revealed, "How the hell did you get ahold of a Band-Aid?!" It feels like *déjà vu* whenever he comes home to El whipping off a bandana or wiping her nose, and when he asks what she did she'll just look up at him with those big, puppy dog eyes as if to ask, *what are you talking about?* – but of course she doesn't, because, Hopper's got to hand it to her, for all her mischief, the kid doesn't lie.

More often than not, he's able to figure out what exactly she did within the hour. Like when she blows her nose and then suggests they eat some Eggos to celebrate the weekend, or when she blinks her eyes and later brings up her friends, and Hopper knows she's visited them in the void. Damn telekinetic teenage angst.

So when Hopper gets home from work to find El rubbing at her nose, he's immediately on guard.

"I know, kid, I'm late," he grumbles, "I'm sorry."

"Eight-one-nine," she replies quietly.

"I'm sorry."

"Okay."

She whips her head around, surprised when her new curls bounce against her face, and continues to watch whatever soap opera rom-com he's interrupted.

"Anything exciting happening?" Hopper asks, nodding towards the TV and sitting down next to her.

She sniffles. "Bo interrupted the wedding."

"He did, huh?" El nods. "Someday I'm gonna have to get you into something other than soaps. Maybe *Star Wars*, if I can rent it."

El shakes her head. "Mike."

Of course the kid already has plans. "Did you visit him today?"

El shakes her head again, then hastily reaches up to cover her face with her hand.

Hopper can't stand it anymore. "Okay, kid, you're killing me. What should I look out for when I get up?"

But El only looks at him with wide eyes.

"You know what I'm talking about. The nosebleed," he adds. "Sock it to me. Are there Eggos waiting in the kitchen?" Her face brightens at the word, but again El shakes her head. Hopper can't help but chuckle. "It's okay, kid," he says, "This is who you are, I get it. Just, what should I be suspecting?"

Finally, El seems to understand, lowering her hand to reveal traces of a bloody nose. "Nothing," she replies, confused.

"Nothing?" Hopper asks. "Then why...?" He goes to ruffle El's hair – it's almost too long for a good ruffle, now, without creating knots Hopper will ultimately have to untangle – when he feels her burning forehead. "Ah, shit."

"Shit?"

"Yeah, don't say that."

"Curse word," El says. Then, smiling widely, "Shit."

"Okay, kid, I get it, you're a teenager," Hopper deadpans, but he's smiling. "You've got a fever. That's why your nose is bleeding."

"Dammit."

Hopper turns around. "Where'd you learn that one?"

"You."

He smiles. His daughter, all right, whether she knew it or not. "Go get some rest, kid," he says. "I'll get you some aspirin." He's halfway to the kitchen cabinet when he hears the *ding* of the toaster and the smell of fresh waffles.

Over his shoulder, El is leaning against her doorway and wiping her nose.